



Foster Parent Connections - 2-20-26

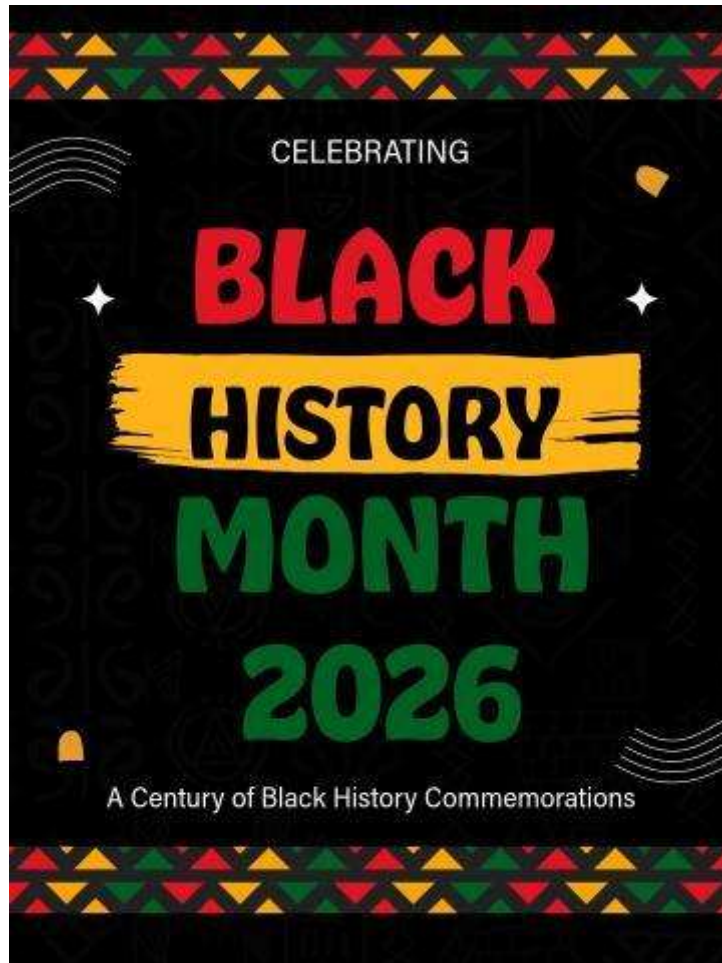
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Announcements



Black History Month

February is Black History Month - a time to honor the rich heritage, achievements, and contributions of African Americans throughout history. As foster parents, you play a vital role in helping children understand and appreciate diversity. This month is an opportunity to share stories of resilience, leadership, and innovation that have shaped our nation.

Consider exploring books, movies, and activities that highlight Black voices and experiences. You could also attend an event together! As a team, foster parents and the Children's Division (CD) can create a sense of belonging and pride for every child in care.

Check out the following links to learn more about events and opportunities to celebrate near you!

- [Missouri University \(MU\) Black History Month Events](#)
- [2026 Statewide Black History Month Celebration](#)
- [St. Louis County Library 2026 Black History Celebrations](#)



Current or Previous Relative Provider Survey

If you are a current or previous relative provider, please take this survey.

Your feedback will help CD make improvements and plan for the future relative licensing process!

Take the Survey



Coming Soon: Foster Parent Portal

We're launching a secure online tool to simplify the foster parent licensing process.

What You'll Be Able to Do:

- Access all licensing info in one place
- Complete and upload forms
- Get updates and reminders

You'll still work closely with your licensing caseworker, the portal just makes things easier and more organized.

Why the Change?

To improve notifications, create consistency, and better support foster parents.

Stay tuned for updates and guidance as we roll out this new resource!



New Foster Parent Webinars

CD will begin hosting quarterly webinars for foster parents! The first session is **April 1, 2026, at noon.**

These webinars will share important CD updates, helpful resources, and other information to support resource providers.

Stay tuned for details on how to join!

[Register Now](#)



RESET Pilot: Specialized Foster Homes for Trafficked Youth

CD is developing a pilot program called RESET, focused on recruiting and training foster homes for youth who have been trafficked or are at high risk.

RESET stands for recovery, empowerment, stability, education, and transition. RESET homes will form a network of specially trained placements that provide safety, support, and care tailored to these children's unique needs. Providers will receive:

- Level B training
- Ongoing support from a contracted child exploitation agency
- Access to a 24-hour crisis line

Although the pilot hasn't officially launched, we're seeking interested foster homes now. If you'd like to learn more or join, email FosterCare@dss.mo.gov.



Foster the Call Conference - June 5-6

Join **Coyote Hill Foster Care Ministries** in Columbia for a two-day event packed with inspiring speakers and hands-on workshops. Learn practical strategies for trauma-informed care, sensory needs, and more!

This conference is perfect for foster parents, caregivers, teachers, pastors, social workers, and anyone working with children who have experienced trauma. Professional development and training hours are available for foster parents and professionals.

Early Bird Tickets: \$40 through March 27

Price increases to \$50 after March 27

Don't miss this opportunity to gain valuable tools and encouragement to better serve vulnerable children.

Register Now



Show Me Healthy Kids

MANAGED BY HOME STATE HEALTH

SMHK: Stay Connected

Access Your SMHK Member Information Anytime, Anywhere

Caring for a child in foster care comes with many responsibilities. The Show Me Healthy Kids (SMHK) Mobile App makes it easier to manage their health plan information whenever you need it — right from your smartphone, tablet, or computer.

These tools are convenient, easy to use, and available 24/7.

What Can You Do in the SMHK Mobile App

- **Access Your ID Card- View a digital version of the youth's SMHK ID card anytime.** View a digital version of their member ID card whenever you need it.
- **Find Provider & Search for Care -** Find doctors and urgent care near you, change the primary care provider, and more.
- **View Plan Benefits-** See the services and benefits available through SMHK.
- **Complete the Health Assessment-** Provide important health information to help SMHK better support the youth in your care.
- **Send Us a Message-** Reach SMHK support through in-app secure messaging.



Get Started with the Mobile App in 3 Easy Steps:

1. Search **"Health Insurance Portal"** in the App Store or Google Play.
2. Select **Missouri** from the state dropdown menu.
3. Log in with your Show Me Healthy Kids member portal credentials—or create a new account.

Prefer Using a Computer? Visit www.HomeStateHealth.com

1. Choose **"MO HealthNet Managed Care – Medicaid."**
2. Under **Member News & Resources**, select **"Mobile App."**
3. Follow the instructions to complete login or registration.

Your role matters. With the mobile app you have the tools to help the youth in your care thrive - every step of the way. Download the app or log in online today!



The Call to Foster Podcast

Season 4, Episode 1: "You've gotta be able to love them beyond the hurt."



In this heartfelt episode of *The Call to Foster Podcast*, hosts Shasta Miller, Jessica Huckstep, and Ashton Kever sit down with Yolanda, a kinship foster parent, and her 13-year-old nephew, Jeremiah, to share their inspiring story. Yolanda opens up about her own experience in foster care as a child and how it shaped her decision to step in when Jeremiah needed a safe, loving home. Together, they discuss the challenges and joys of fostering teens, the importance of family bonds, and practical advice for navigating technology, setting boundaries, and finding support.

Jeremiah offers a unique perspective from a youth in care by sharing what helped him feel safe, his coping strategies, and his honest advice for future foster parents. From powerful insights on "loving beyond the hurt" to the role of community and counseling, this episode is packed with wisdom, encouragement, and real-life experiences that every foster parent or prospective foster family needs to hear.

If you know someone considering fostering, this conversation will leave them inspired and informed. Please share it with them and help them [get started on their foster parenting journey on our website](#).

Listen Now



Regulation & Policy Reminders

In-Service Training Hours

Resource providers renewing their license every two years must complete required in-service training hours during the licensing period.

Requirements:

- All resource providers: **30 hours per 2-year period**
- Level A: **30 hours**
- Medical care: **30 hours**
- Level B: **32 hours**

These hours are part of your professional family development plan and are required by state regulations.

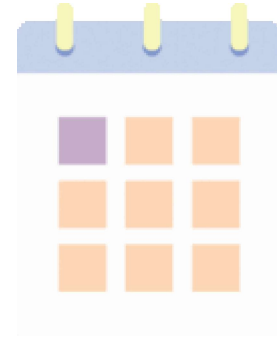
For approved training options and the statewide training calendar, click the links in the section below.



Training

Statewide Training Calendar

A statewide training calendar that includes all the available trainings in the state for prospective and current resource providers has been created. Please feel free to utilize this calendar to search for your training needs.



[View the Calendar](#)

Other Training Opportunities

The following links will take you to a multitude of training opportunities that are available for in-service hours:

[Parent Cafe Training Institute \(missouri.edu\)](#)

[Foster Parent College - Online Training for Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Parents and Caregivers](#)

[Training | Child Welfare Information Gateway](#)

[All Courses - FosterAdopt Connect Training \(thinkific.com\)](#)

[Family Development Training - Central Missouri Foster Care and Adoption Association](#)

[Training for Parents | Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition \(foster-adopt.org\)](#)

[KVC Missouri Trainings](#)

[National Training and Development Curriculum for Foster and Adoptive Parents](#)

[DSS Foster Parent Training Opportunities](#)



Tips & Resources

Taxes

As the new year begins, it is time to start preparing for tax season. Please refer to the [Foster Parent Tax Deduction Frequently Asked Questions](#) from the Missouri Department of Revenue to answer your questions about your taxes as a resource provider.

Please remember, CD employees may not be able to answer your tax questions. It is best to ask your accountant or tax advisor for specific questions.



Safety Alert: Self-Feeding Infant Pillows

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is warning consumers to immediately stop using infant self-feeding pillows because the pillows secure the bottle at an unsafe angle while keeping it fixed in place, preventing the infant from pulling away. This can lead to aspiration of milk or formula, posing a risk of serious injury or death from suffocation.

The self-feeding pillows are made of stuffed fabric and have arms that wrap around the infant's neck. The pillows fasten with snaps or a hook-and-loop fastener behind the infant's head. An elasticized sleeve or mesh pocket secures the bottle at an angle in front of the infant's face.

Please ensure the safety of the children in your care and do not use this product.



Did you know February is National Library Lover's Month?

February isn't just about hearts and flowers - it's National Library Lovers' Month!

Libraries offer so much more than books: free internet, job help, classes, streaming services, and a quiet place to recharge. Libraries are also a great free resource for foster parents.

Show your love by visiting your local library, signing up for a card, or checking out their book sales. Happy reading!

Find a Library Near You



Kansas City/Northwest Resources and Support You Can Access Today

Check out these great tools, education, and therapeutic services for foster parents. Explore these opportunities designed to strengthen families and help children thrive:

1. Therapeutic Support for Foster Families and Relative Providers

Access **free counseling and support services** tailored to caregivers and children, including trauma-informed therapy, parenting education, and group support. Flexible scheduling and no-cost options available!

2. Fostering Change: 2026 Parenting Classes

Join **monthly classes** covering essential topics like adolescent brain development, healthy boundaries, social media impacts, and stress management. Attend three or more sessions to earn training or CEU credits!

3. Educational Support for Foster and Relative Providers

Get expert guidance on **IEPs, 504 Plans, and advocacy strategies** to ensure every child's educational needs are met. Learn your rights, prepare for school meetings, and access resources to help youth succeed.

Click any of the buttons below to learn more and register for these valuable services and classes!

Therapeutic
Support

Parenting Classes

Educational
Support



Foster Parent Identification Cards

All Foster Parents should have a Foster Parent ID card. This is provided to you after you are licensed. If you do not have an ID card, please email FosterCare@dss.mo.gov to start your application.

Family Resource Centers

Family Resource Centers are not-for-profit agencies that work with CD to provide support, services, and resources to meet the unique needs of foster, adoptive, relative, and guardianship children and their families.

Find an FRC Near Me



**Find a Resource
Center Near Me**

**Get a Foster Parent
ID Card**

Caregiver Portal

**Apply to Be an
Ambassador**

**Questions or
Concerns**



CD Wants to Hear from You!

If there is information you would like covered in future Foster Parent Connections Newsletters, please email Abigail.J.Smith@dss.mo.gov.



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